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Unlikely Exhibit Opens At Federal Courthouse

The U.S. Federal Courthouse isn't a likely spot to find a zebra made from a bowling pin, a large colorful *papier-mâché* fish, or a collection of ceramic masks, but for the next two months, visitors will find just that—plus a collection of other works of art.

The exhibit, featuring the work of individuals served by the Day Treatment and Deaf Services at Milestone Centers, in Wilkinsburg, will continue through the end of November. Each month some 15,000 people pass through the lobby and first floor, where the artwork is displayed.

The artists are in recovery from mental illness, a disorder that afflicts one in four Americans and often results in disability and premature death. Some also have developmental disabilities and/or are deaf. Diverse in background and age, they are able to develop their talents and increase their self confidence and self-esteem through Milestone's therapeutic programs in the arts.

A poem, "Necessary and Desirable," by the Poetry Group introduces the exhibit and the artists: "*We remain calm through the noise and commotion of this world and value the peace we find in silence. . . . We maintain a sense of direction and try to be gentle with ourselves; We are children of the universe—no less than the trees or the stars—and we have a right to be here. . . . Whatever may happen, it is still a beautiful world and we make every effort to remain happy.*"

"Art relaxes me," comments one of the artists, George, who helped to mount the exhibit. "It takes a lot of concentration, but it's a good distraction from everyday life." Heather, who turns bowling pins into Egyptian pharaohs and other objects of beauty, agrees. "Art," she says, "makes my mind calmer and more peaceful. It allows me to express my creativity."

The Community Outreach Committee for the Federal Court invited Milestone artists to display their works after reading about their "Art of Giving" project at Kane Glen Hazel Regional Center earlier this year in which they donated art and took photographs of places the residents remembered to brighten the center's walls.

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